



Emelyan, the Fool

The Russian Garland

Russian

Intermediate

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In a certain village lived at one time a peasant, who had three sons, two of whom were clever, but the third was a fool, and his name was Emelyan. And when the peasant had lived a long time, and was grown very old, he called his three sons to him, and said to them: "My dear children, I feel that I have not much longer to live; so I give you the house and cattle, which you will divide among you, share and share alike. I have also given you each a hundred roubles." Soon after, the old man died, and the sons, when they had buried him, lived on happy and contented.

Some time afterwards Emelyan's brothers took a fancy to go to the city and trade with the hundred roubles their father had left them. So they said to Emelyan: "Hark ye, fool! we are going to the city, and will take your hundred roubles with us; and, if we prosper in trade, we will buy you a red coat, red boots, and a red cap. But do you stay here at home; and when our wives, your sisters-in-law, desire you to do anything, do as they bid you." The fool, who had a great longing for a red coat and cap, and red boots, answered that he would do whatever his sisters-in-law bade him. So his brothers went off to the city, and the fool stayed at home with his two sisters.

One day, when the winter was come, and the cold was great, his sisters-in-law told him to go out and fetch water; but the fool remained lying on the stove, and said: "Ay, indeed, and who then are you?" The sisters began to scold him, and said: "How now, fool! we are what you see. You know how cold it is, and that it is a man's business to go." But he said: "I am lazy." "How!" they exclaimed, "you are lazy? Surely you will want to eat, and

if we have no water we cannot cook. But never mind," they added; "we will only tell our husbands not to give him anything when they have bought the fine red coat and all for him!"

The fool heard what they said; and, as he longed greatly to have the red coat and cap, he saw that he must go; so he got down from the stove and began to put on his shoes and stockings and to dress himself to go out. When he was dressed, he took the buckets and the axe and went down to the river hard by. And when he came to the river he began to cut a large hole in the ice. Then he drew water in the buckets, and setting them on the ice, he stood by the hole, looking into the water. And as the fool was looking, he saw a large pike swimming about. However stupid Emelyan was, he felt a wish to catch this pike; so he stole cautiously and softly to the edge of the hole, and making a sudden grasp at the pike he caught him, and pulled him out of the water. Then, putting him in his bosom, he was hastening home with him, when the pike cried out: "Ho, fool! why have you caught me?" He answered: "To take you home and get my sisters-in-law to cook you." "Nay, fool! do not take me home, but throw me back into the water and I will make a rich man of you." But the fool would not consent, and jogged on his way home. When the pike saw that the fool was not for letting him go, he said to him: "Hark ye, fool! put me back in the water and I will do for you everything you do not like to do yourself; you will only have to wish and it shall be done."

On hearing this the fool rejoiced beyond measure for, as he was uncommonly lazy, he thought to himself: "If the pike does everything I have no mind to do, all will be done without my being troubled to work." So he said to the pike: "I will throw you back into the water if you do all you promise." The pike said: "Let me go first and then I will keep my promise." But the fool answered: "Nay, nay, you must first perform your promise, and then I will let you go." When the pike saw that Emelyan would not put him into the water he said: "If you wish me to do all you desire, you must first tell me what your desire is." "I wish," said the fool, "that my buckets should go of themselves from the river up the hill to the village without spilling any of the water." Then said the pike: "Listen now, and remember the words I say to you: At the pike's command, and at my desire, go, buckets, of yourselves up the hill!" Then the fool repeated after him these words, and instantly, with the speed of thought, the buckets ran up the hill. When Emelyan saw this he was amazed beyond measure, and he said to the pike: "But will it always be so?" "Everything you desire will be done," replied the pike; "but I warn you not to forget the words I have taught you." Then Emelyan put the pike into the water and followed his buckets home.

The neighbours were all amazed and said to one another: "This fool makes the buckets come up of themselves from the river, and he follows them home at his leisure." But Emelyan took no notice of them, and went his

way home. The buckets were by this time in the house, and standing in their place on the foot-bench; so the fool got up and stretched himself on the stove.

After some time his sisters-in-law said to him again: "Emelyan, why are you lazying there? Get up and go cut wood." But the fool replied: "Yes! and you—who are you?" "Don't you see it is now winter, and if you don't cut wood you will be frozen?" "I am lazy," said the fool. "What! you are lazy?" cried the sisters. "If you do not go instantly and cut wood, we will tell our husbands not to give you the red coat, or the red cap, or the fine red boots!" The fool, who longed for the red cap, coat, and boots, saw that he must go and cut the wood; but as it was bitterly cold, and he did not like to come down from off the stove, he repeated in an undertone, as he lay, the words: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, up, axe, and hew the wood! and do you, logs, come of yourselves in the stove!" Instantly the axe jumped up, ran out into the yard, and began to cut up the wood; and the logs came of themselves into the house, and laid themselves in the stove. When the sisters saw this, they wondered exceedingly at the cleverness of the fool; and, as the axe did of its own accord the work whenever Emelyan was wanted to cut wood, he lived for some time in peace and harmony with them. At length the wood was all finished, and they said to him: "Emelyan, we have no more wood, so you must go to the forest and cut some." "Ay," said the fool, "and you, who are you, then?" The sisters replied: "The wood is far off, and it is winter, and too cold for us to go." But the fool only said: "I am lazy." "How! you are lazy," cried they; "you will be frozen then; and moreover, we will take care, when our husbands come home, that they shall not give you the red coat, cap, and boots." As the fool longed for the clothes, he saw that he must go and cut the wood; so he got off the stove, put on his shoes and stockings, and dressed himself; and, when he was dressed, he went into the yard, dragged the sledge out of the shed, took a rope and the axe with him, and called out to his sisters-in-law: "Open the gate."

When the sisters saw that he was riding off without any horses, they cried: "Why, Emelyan, you have got on the sledge without yoking the horses!" But he answered that he wanted no horses, and bade them only open the gate. So the sisters threw open the gate, and the fool repeated the words: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, away, sledge, off to the wood!" Instantly the sledge galloped out of the yard at such a rate that the people of the village, when they saw it, were filled with amazement at Emelyan's riding the sledge without horses, and with such speed that a pair of horses could never have drawn it at such a rate. The fool had to pass through the town on his way to the wood, and away he dashed at full speed. But the fool did not know that he should cry out: "Make way!" so that he should not run over anyone; but away he went, and rode over quite a lot of people; and, though they ran after him, no one was able to overtake and bring him back. At last Emelyan,

having got clear of the town, came to the wood and stopped his sledge. Then he got down and said: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, up, axe, hew wood; and you, logs! lay yourselves on the sledge, and tie yourselves together." Scarcely had the fool uttered these words when the axe began to cut wood, the logs to lay themselves on the sledge, and the rope to tie them down. When the axe had cut wood enough, Emelyan desired it to cut him a good cudgel; and when the axe had done this, he mounted the sledge and cried: "Up, and away! At the pike's command, and at my desire, go home, sledge!" Away then went the sledge at the top of its speed, and when he came to the town, where he had hurt so many people, he found a crowd waiting to catch him; and, as soon as he got into the gates, they laid hold of him, dragged him off his sledge, and fell to beating him. When the fool saw how they were treating him, he said in an under voice: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, up, cudgel, and thrash them!" Instantly the cudgel began to lay about it on all sides; and, when the people were all driven away, he made his escape, and came to his own village. The cudgel, having thrashed all soundly, rolled home after him; and Emelyan, as usual, when he got home, climbed up and lay upon the stove.

After he had left the town, all the people fell to talking, not so much of the number of persons he had injured, as of their amazement at his riding in a sledge without horses; and the news spread from one to another, till it reached the Court and came to the ears of the King. And when the King heard it, he felt an extreme desire to see him: so he sent an officer with some soldiers to look for him. The officer instantly started, and took the road that the fool had taken; and when he came to the village where Emelyan lived, he summoned the Starosta, or head-man of the village, and said to him: "I am sent by the King to take a certain fool, and bring him before his Majesty." The Starosta at once showed him the house where Emelyan lived, and the officer went into it and asked where the fool was. He was lying on the stove, and answered: "What is it you want with me?" "How!" said the officer, "what do I want with you? Get up this instant and dress yourself; I must take you to the King." But Emelyan said: "What to do?" Whereat the officer became so enraged at the rudeness of his replies that he hit him on the cheek. "At the pike's command, and at my desire," said the fool, "up, cudgel, and thrash them!" Instantly up sprang the cudgel and began to lay about it on all sides. So the officer was obliged to go back to the town as fast as he could; and when he came before the King, and told him how the fool had cudgelled him, the King marvelled greatly, and would not believe the story.

Then the King called to him a wise man and ordered him to bring the fool by craft, if nothing else would do; so the wise man went to the village where Emelyan lived, called the Starosta before him and said: "I am ordered by the King to take your fool; and therefore ask for the persons with whom he lived." Then the Starosta ran and fetched Emelyan's sisters-in-law. The King's messenger asked them what it was the fool liked, and they

answered: "Noble sir, if anyone entreats our fool earnestly to do anything, he flatly refuses the first and second time; the third time he consents, and does what he is required, for he dislikes to be roughly treated."

The King's messenger thereupon dismissed them and forbade them to tell Emelyan that he had summoned them before him. Then he brought raisins, baked plums, and grapes, and went to the fool. When he came into the room, he went up to the stove and said: "Emelyan, why are you lying there?" and with that he gave him the raisins, the baked plums, and the grapes, and said: "Emelyan, we will go together to the King: I will take you with me." But the fool replied: "I am very warm here"; for there was nothing he liked so much as being warm. Then the messenger began to entreat him: "Be so good, Emelyan, do let us go! You will like the Court vastly." "No," said the fool "I am lazy." But the messenger entreated him once more: "Do come with me, there's a good fellow, and the King will give you a fine red coat and cap, and a pair of red boots." When the fool heard of the red coat he said: "Go on before, I will follow you." The messenger pressed him no further, but went out and asked the sisters-in-law if there was any danger of the fool's deceiving him. They assured him there was not, and he went away.

Emelyan, who remained lying on the stove, then said to himself: "How I dislike this going to the King!" And after a minute's thought, he said: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, up, stove, and away to the town!" And instantly the wall of the room opened, and the stove moved out; and when it got clear of the yard, it went at such a rate that there was no overtaking it; soon it came up with the King's messenger, and went along with him into the palace. When the King saw the fool coming, he went forth with all his Court to meet him; and he was amazed beyond measure at seeing Emelyan come riding on the stove. But the fool lay still and said nothing. Then the King asked him why he had upset so many people on his way to the wood. "It was their own fault," said the fool; "why did they not get out of the way?"

Just at that moment the King's daughter came to the window, and Emelyan happening suddenly to look up, and seeing how handsome she was, said in a whisper: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, let this lovely maiden fall in love with me!" And scarcely had he spoken the words when the King's daughter fell desperately in love with him. Then said the fool: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, up, stove, and away home!" Immediately the stove left the palace, went through the town, returned home, and set itself in its old place. And Emelyan lived there for some time comfortably and happy.

But it was very different in the town; for, at the word of Emelyan, the King's daughter had fallen in love, and she began to implore her father to give her the fool for her husband. The King was in a great rage, both with

her and the fool, but he knew not how to catch him; then his minister proposed that the same officer, as a punishment for not succeeding the first time, should be sent again to take Emelyan. This advice pleased the King, and he summoned the officer to his presence, and said: "Hark ye, friend! I sent you before for the fool, and you came back without him; to punish you I now send you for him a second time. If you bring him, you shall be rewarded; if you return without him, you shall be punished."

When the officer heard this, he left the King and lost no time in going in quest of the fool; and on coming to the village he called for the Starosta and said to him: "Here is money for you; buy everything necessary for a good dinner to-morrow. Invite Emelyan, and when he comes, make him drink until he falls asleep." The Starosta, knowing that the officer came from the King, was obliged to obey him; so he bought all that was required and invited the fool. And Emelyan said he would come, whereat the officer was greatly rejoiced. So next day the fool came to dinner, and the Starosta plied him so well with drink that he fell fast asleep. When the officer saw this, he ordered the kibitka (or carriage) to be brought; and putting the fool into it, they drove off to the town, and went straight to the palace. As soon as the King heard that they were come, he ordered a large cask to be provided without delay, and to be bound with strong iron hoops. When the cask was brought to the King, and he saw that everything was ready as he desired, he commanded his daughter and the fool to be put in it, and the cask to be well pitched; and, when this was all done, the cask was thrown into the sea, and left to the mercy of the waves. Then the King returned to his palace, and the cask floated along upon the sea. All this time the fool was fast asleep; when he awoke, and saw that it was quite dark, he said to himself: "Where am I?" for he thought he was alone. But the Princess said: "You are in a cask, Emelyan! and I am shut up with you in it." "But who are you?" said the fool. "I am the King's daughter," replied she. And she told him why she had been shut up there with him. Then she besought him to free himself and her out of the cask; but the fool said: "Nay, I am warm enough here." "But grant me at least the favour," said the Princess; "have pity on my tears, and deliver me out of this cask." "Why so?" said Emelyan; "I am lazy." Then the Princess began to entreat him still more urgently, until the fool was at last moved by her tears and entreaties, and said: "Well, I will do this for you." Then he said softly: "At the pike's command, and at my desire, cast us, O sea! upon the shore, where we may dwell on dry land; but let it be near our own country; and, cask! fall to pieces on the shore."

Scarcely had the fool uttered these words when the waves began to roll, and the cask was thrown on a dry place, and fell to pieces of itself. So Emelyan got up and went with the Princess round about the spot where they were cast; and the fool saw that they were on a fine island, where there was an abundance of trees, with all kinds of fruit upon them. When the Princess saw this, she was greatly rejoiced and said: "But, Emelyan, where shall we

live? there is not even a nook here.” “You want too much,” said the fool. “Grant me one favour,” replied the Princess: “let there be at least a little cottage in which we may shelter ourselves from the rain”; for the Princess knew that he could do everything that he wished. But the fool said: “I am lazy.” Nevertheless, she went on entreating him, until at last Emelyan was obliged to do as she desired. Then he stepped aside and said: “At the pike’s command, and at my desire, let me have in the middle of this island a finer castle than the King’s, and let a crystal bridge lead from my castle to the royal palace; and let there be attendants of all conditions in the court!” Hardly were the words spoken, when there appeared a splendid castle, with a crystal bridge. The fool went with the Princess into the castle and beheld the apartments all magnificently furnished, and a number of persons, footmen and all kinds of officers, who waited for the fool’s commands. When he saw that all these men were like men, and that he alone was ugly and stupid, he wished to be better, so he said: “At the pike’s command, and at my desire, away! let me become a youth without an equal, and extremely wise!” And hardly had he spoken, when he became so handsome and so wise that all were amazed.

Emelyan now sent one of his servants to the King to invite him and all his Court. So the servant went along the crystal bridge which the fool had made, and when he came to the Court, the ministers brought him before the King, and Emelyan’s messenger said: “Please, your Majesty, I am sent by my master to invite you to dinner.” The King asked him who his master was, but he answered: “Please, your Majesty, I can tell you nothing about my master (for the fool had ordered him not to tell who he was), but if you come to dine with him, he will inform you himself.” The King, being curious to know who had sent to invite him, told the messenger that he would go without fail. The servant went away, and when he got home the King and his Court set out along the crystal bridge to go and visit the fool; and, when they arrived at the castle, Emelyan came forth to meet the King, took him by his white hands, kissed him on his sugared lips, led him into his castle, and seated him at the oaken tables covered with fine diaper tablecloths, and spread with sugar-meats and honey-drinks. The King and his ministers ate and drank and made merry. When they rose from the table and retired, the fool said to the King: “Does your Majesty know who I am?” As Emelyan was now dressed in fine clothes, and was very handsome, it was not possible to recognize him; so the King replied that he did not know him. Then the fool said: “Does not your Majesty recollect how a fool came riding on a stove to your Court, and how you fastened him up in a pitched cask with your daughter, and cast them into the sea? Know me now—I am that Emelyan.”

When the King saw him thus in his presence he was greatly terrified and knew not what to do. But the fool went to the Princess and led her out to him; and the King, on seeing his daughter, was greatly rejoiced, and said: “I have been very unjust to you, and so I gladly give you my daughter, to wife.” The fool humbly thanked

the King; and when Emelyan had prepared everything for the wedding, it was celebrated with great magnificence, and the following day the fool gave a feast to the ministers and all the people. When the festivities were at an end, the King wanted to give up his kingdom to his son-in-law, but Emelyan did not wish to have the crown. So the King went back to his kingdom, and the fool remained in the castle and lived happily.

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